

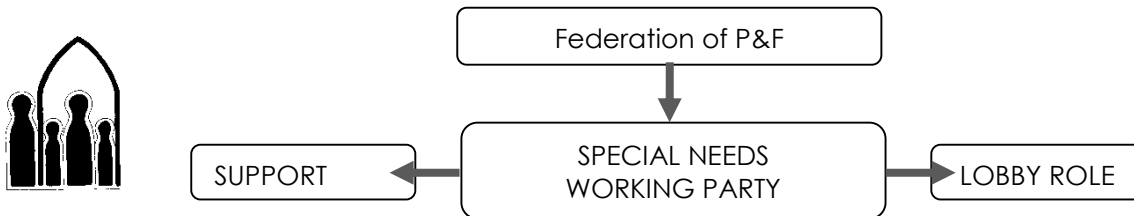
CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

THE FEDERATION OF PARENTS & FRIENDS ASSOCIATIONS ■ DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

"Fairness is not everyone getting the same, but everyone getting what he or she needs."

SOCRATES 431 BC

The Federation of Parents & Friends Associations, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is made up of parent representatives of the 55 Diocesan schools. The Working Party for Children with Special Needs is a sub-committee of, and is accountable to, the Federation. There are two roles of the Working party – the Support Role and the Lobby Role.



ROLE OF THE WORKING PARTY

- Act as a forum for the exchange of information relevant for the education of Children with Special Needs.
- Facilitate a Support Group for parents of Children with Special Needs.
- Lobby relevant bodies to ensure justice and equity in the provision of educational resources for the Children with Special Needs.

SUPPORT ROLE

The Special Needs Support Group provides an opportunity for parents to share their experiences, seek support and learn from others. It also

- Provides a forum to discuss issues relating to the education of your children.
- Encourages a sharing of information.
- Skills parents in the roles of advocacy.
- Provides information regarding the availability of services for Children with Special Needs
- Provides professional support by inviting guests in particular fields to address Support Group meetings.

LOBBY ROLE

The Working Party provides a "voice" for parents in relation to issues which affect parents generally by:

- Submission to State and Federal government for increased funding.
- Organised meetings with relevant ministers and shadow ministers.
- Providing schools, P&F's and parents with a process to allow them to actively lobby local members and to seek representation in Parliament.
- Liaising with the NSW CEC (Catholic Education Commission), CCSP (Council of Catholic School Parents), and Catholic Schools Council Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

Membership of the Working Party

The Federation Council **appoints** a Chairperson with suitable experience, and two other parents to the Working Party. Another two parents are sought, via written **nomination**, with selection made by the Council to maintain a balance of representation across ages and special needs. Other members include a Principal, a Support Teacher, and members of the Student Support Unit. Others may be invited to join the Special Needs Working Party as the need for their expertise and advice arises.

For more information about the Special Needs Working Party contact

Cath Garrett-Jones, Parent Liaison & Resources Officer

Phone: 4979 1303

Fax: 4965 1208

Email: cath.garrett-jones@mn.catholic.edu.au

WHAT constitutes “special needs”?

The term “special needs” was originally used in an attempt to give as broad a name as possible. Current terminology refers to students with additional needs rather than special needs. In the Diocese of Maitland - Newcastle students with additional needs are those students who have an identified need in an area or areas. Some students have a diagnosed disability and as such are eligible for additional support through Government funding. Other students do not have a confirmed disability but may present with additional needs such as a learning difficulty or a behavioural or emotional difficulty. Schools provide support, and make adjustments, for all students who are identified with additional needs.

WHO can attend Special Needs Education/Support Days?

The Special Needs Working Party hosts Education and Support Days for ALL PARENTS who have children within the Catholic School system, and also their family, friends and caregivers.

WHERE are Special Needs Education/Support Days held?

Newcastle days are generally held at a school in Newcastle in a central location. Support Days are also offered in the Manning Region and the Upper Hunter Region. Minimum numbers may be set by organisers.

WHAT topics are covered?

Parents, through surveying, determine the topics covered. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- support services in schools
- managing difficult behaviours
- issues in relating with siblings
- building self-esteem
- assistance with literacy skills

WHEN are the Education/Support days held?

Activities are held throughout the year with times varying **between daytime and evening**. Parents are free to arrive and depart as it suits them. There are no restrictions placed on participation.

WHAT is the cost?

There is no cost to participate. However, a donation to cover the costs of morning tea and lunch may be sought.

REMEMBER...

The Student Support Unit (SSU) is part of Teaching & Learning Services at the Catholic Schools Office. SSU Education Officers and Psychologists provide services to schools, teachers, parents and students in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. Referral is made in the first instance by the class teacher to the school's Learning Support Team, and then if necessary the Learning Support Teacher / Coordinator will contact the relevant personnel at the SSU. Referrals can be made for a range of issues related to: learning difficulties, behaviour, mental health, social / emotional health, speech and language, autism and developmental issues, gifted and talented support, and cognitive assessments.

Where can you obtain information regarding “Special Needs” activities?

- The Parent Liaison & Resource Officer:
P: 4979 1303
E: cath.garrett-jones@mn.catholic.edu.au
- Student Support Unit Catholic Schools Office Phone: 4979 1293
- School LSC/LST (Learning Support Coordinator/Teacher)
- Principal or school newsletter

